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The Euston Road School

The Arts Council

1948

THE EUSTON ROAD SCHOOL

Catalogue of an Exhibition of
Paintings and Drawings by

GRAHAM BELL

B. A. R. CARTER

WILLIAM COLDSTREAM

DENIS DAWNAY

LAWRENCE GOWING

VICTOR PASMORE

BASIL ROCKE

CLAUDE ROGERS

WILLIAM TOWNSEND

The Arts Council of Great Britain

1948

Foreword

THE NAME 'Euston Road' was first applied in 1939 by Mr Clive Bell to a group of painters centred round the *School of Drawing and Painting* founded by William Coldstream, Victor Pasmore and Claude Rogers with Graham Bell in 1937. Flattering in its inference of descent from the Camden Town Group, reproachful in its associations of drabness and drizzle, the artists concerned found it convenient to accept this label, though they felt no need, since it came unasked, to defend it. The Euston Road School has undoubtedly had an influence considerably beyond its immediate connections. What was the approach and intention of its original founders is admirably explained by Mr Townsend in his introduction to this catalogue; the pictures here exhibited are a demonstration of its value.

This exhibition is a concentrated version of one arranged by the Wakefield City Art Gallery during the summer of 1948 and subsequently shown at Harrogate, Sheffield and Brighton. The artists there represented have been reduced in number to the four original teachers in the school, four of their pupils, and one close associate.

The Arts Council offers its warmest thanks to the owners and artists who have lent their works; to Mr William Townsend for his introduction and for much other practical help; to the Director of the Wakefield City Art Gallery, Mr Eric Westbrook, for his assistance and interest; and to Messrs Percy Lund Humphries for permission to use their block of the painting reproduced on Plate II.

P. J.

Introduction

MOST OF the prominent groups of painters of this century appear to have regarded the seen world as only a starting point from which to explore their own feelings, or as something to transform into an ideal shape, or into some new kind of harmony theoretically arrived at; or even as something to escape from into a world of imagery and personal symbols. In all these ways fine pictures have been produced.

The painters whose works are exhibited here have no 'artistic programme' but they have in common an attitude of mind that distinguishes them from a great many of their contemporaries. It would be true of all of them, I think, to say that they are intensely interested in what they see around them: people, buildings, landscapes; and that they try to paint this outside world without imposing on it any kind of pattern or feeling or atmosphere that they do not find in the things they are looking at.

If they try to let their pictures grow out of the things they have looked at, that does not mean that they are concerned merely with what is commonly called 'likeness'. 'Likeness' can often be achieved by employing well-worn tricks, conventions and formulas, and we have grown so used to such devices that we no longer notice how untrue they often are; but to rely on them is, after all, to put some ideal or accepted interpretation on things, and it prevents the artist from trying to see what is there.

In 1937, with the assistance and encouragement of Sir Kenneth Clark and others who were interested in their ideas, the late Graham Bell together with William Coldstream, Victor Pasmore and Claude Rogers opened in London a school for drawing and painting. While they had no fully worked out aesthetic doctrine to preach, nor rules of practice that they wanted their students to follow, they did feel that an unprejudiced approach to the objective world still had a great deal to offer to the artist. This was not claimed as anything new, but at that time the idea had become an unfashionable one through the impact of the discoveries and experiments of the painters of the 'Ecole de Paris'. Exhibitions of French painting filled the London galleries in the 1930's

in bewildering succession and exerted a great influence on all young painters of that time. By 1937 the influence of Paris had become almost a tyranny. It was very hard for the student to distinguish between the important advances made by some of the Paris painters and the intoxicating novelties of others; and few resisted the temptation to strive to be 'in the movement'. Stimulating as all this was, in many ways the influence of Paris was very restricting to the English painter. Many of the subjects and interests that might have proved fertile were so unfashionable as almost to be taboo. Portraiture, landscape in which effects of light or atmosphere were considered, any subject with an anecdotal or story-telling aspect or that smacked of literary interest, any subject that could in any way be considered sentimental or that had strong associations remote from its purely formal aspect—all these were unacceptable to anyone considering himself 'modern'.

Through a variety of experiences the four painters mentioned above had come to the conclusion that the things they daily saw around them and quite ordinary happenings, which indeed they had always found interesting in themselves, were by no means exhausted, as they had almost persuaded themselves they were, as material for their own painting. Early in their professional careers the difficulties of the period of the slump had driven them to earn their livings by other part-time work. Coldstream joined Grierson in the production of documentary films and in the film unit came into contact with W. H. Auden and other young poets of 'realist' tendencies. Rogers took to teaching and began to paint pictures of classrooms and playing fields. Pasmore was a clerk in the L.C.C. who painted at weekends; Graham Bell, who came to London from South Africa in 1931, turned to part-time journalism and art criticism. These activities and the contacts they brought about made them less convinced of the infallibility of the theories of picture-making then in favour, though none of them, even today, would underrate the importance of Cubism or the 'Ecole de Paris' or of their influence, or of the value of their own experiments in 'abstract' painting.

Their school was for drawing and painting only. They decided that the best way to teach was by painting in the same studios with their students, and they encouraged their students to look at the objects they were painting without theories or preconceptions, to keep their eyes on what they saw and let their pictures grow out of that. The school was soon full of students and an unexpected success; and though its correct title was 'The School of Drawing and Painting' the critics soon

gave the name 'Euston Road School' to these painters and their associates.

A number of mixed exhibitions followed. Sometimes they exhibited with painters of another generation—Dame Ethel Walker, Duncan Grant and others—who were sympathetic towards them; sometimes in company with painters of their own generation who were their friends or who were working in similar directions—Rodrigo Moynihan, Geoffrey Tibble, Anthony Devas, the present writer, and others who had been at the Slade with Coldstream and Rogers, or John Dodgson and Robert Medley who were old friends; sometimes with their own students.

Among the exhibitors here Lawrence Gowing, B. A. R. Carter, Denis Dawnay and Basil Rocke were students at the original Euston Road School. The writer of this introduction has through friendship and sympathy of outlook been among those associated with the Euston Road painters for a good many years.

The school closed down late in 1939 when the painters went into the Forces. Graham Bell enlisted in the R.A.F. and was killed on active service in 1943. In that year Coldstream was appointed an official war artist and painted a series of portraits of Indian soldiers in Cairo and scenes in Capua and Rimini during the invasion of Italy.

The works in this collection include paintings from the late 1930's from which it is clear that the painters were starting out from some such common ground as has been indicated. They had chosen a direction in which, almost by definition, progress must be slow and without sudden or spectacular changes in feeling or in manner; the later works exhibited present these very distinct artistic personalities in a maturer development.

The term 'Euston Road School' has often been used very loosely to include painters of many varying tendencies who at one time or another have exhibited with these artists, sometimes to describe painters who have had nothing to do with the School, and sometimes to describe almost any painter producing more or less 'realistic' pictures or else a kind of revised impressionism. It seems less confusing to use the term here to refer to those painters who started and conducted the school in the Euston Road from 1937 to 1939 and to their students.

WILLIAM TOWNSEND

List of Owners

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MISS ESTHER DARLINGTON, 22

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W. T. OLIVER, ESQ., 47

MISS PHOEBE POOL, 36

MISS A. O. POPHAM, 2, 4

ADRIAN STOKES, ESQ., 1

THE WAKEFIELD CITY ART GALLERY, 28

MISS E. M. WILLIAMSON, 13

PLATE I WILLIAM COLDSTREAM: ON THE MAP No. 11

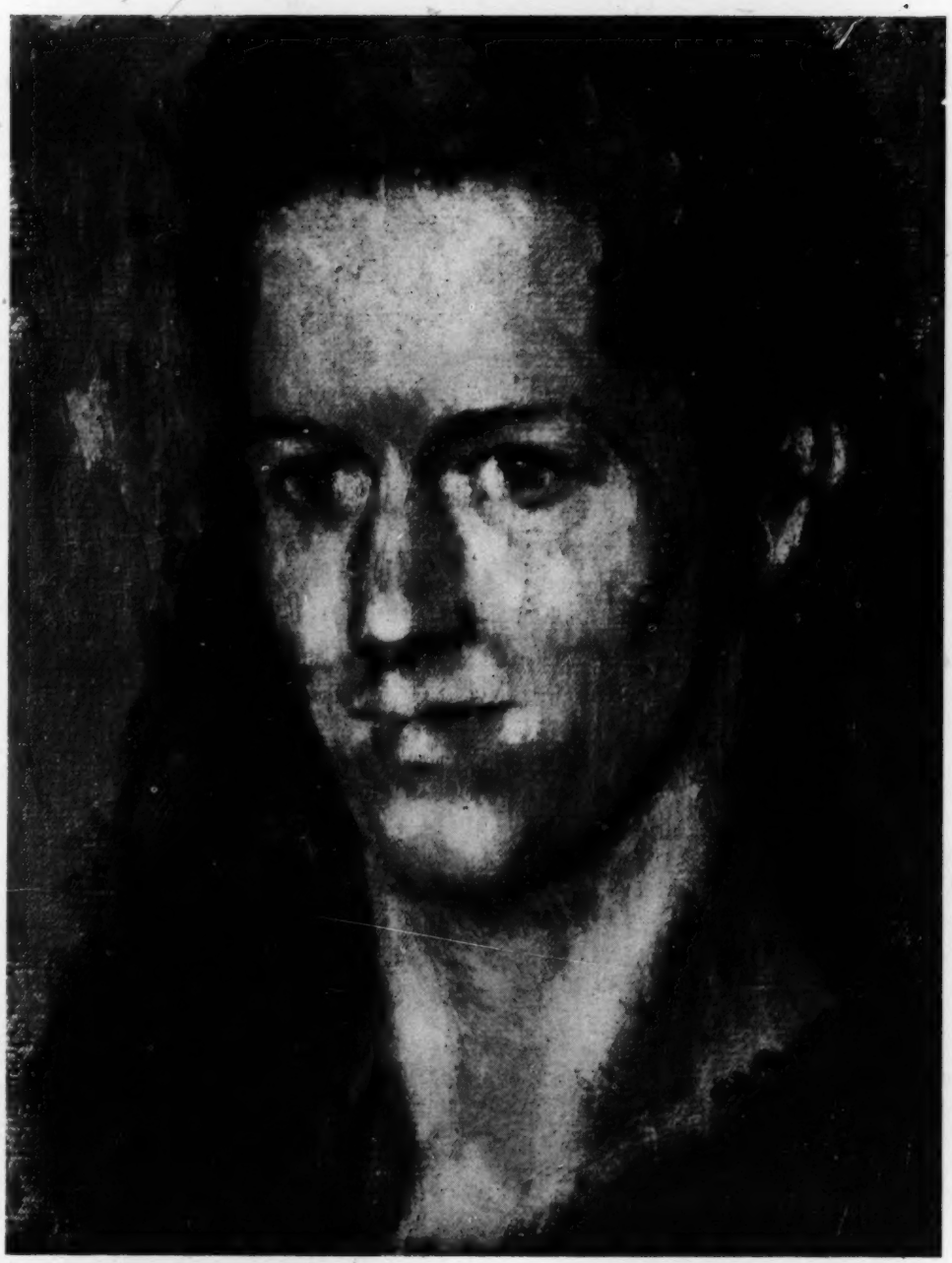

PLATE II GRAHAM BELL: HEAD OF A GIRL No. 5

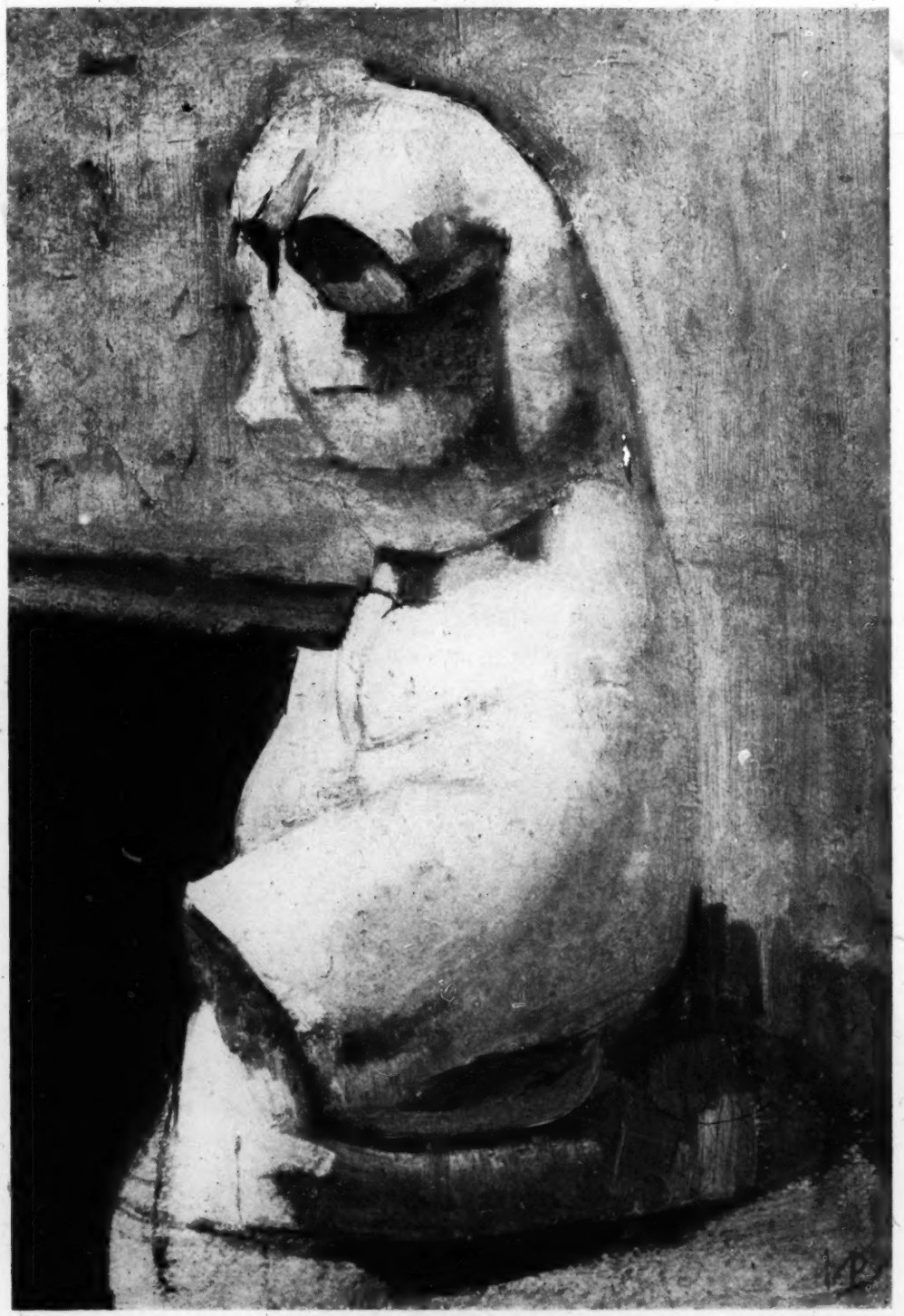

PLATE III VICTOR PASMORE: STUDY OF THE ANTIQUE No. 27

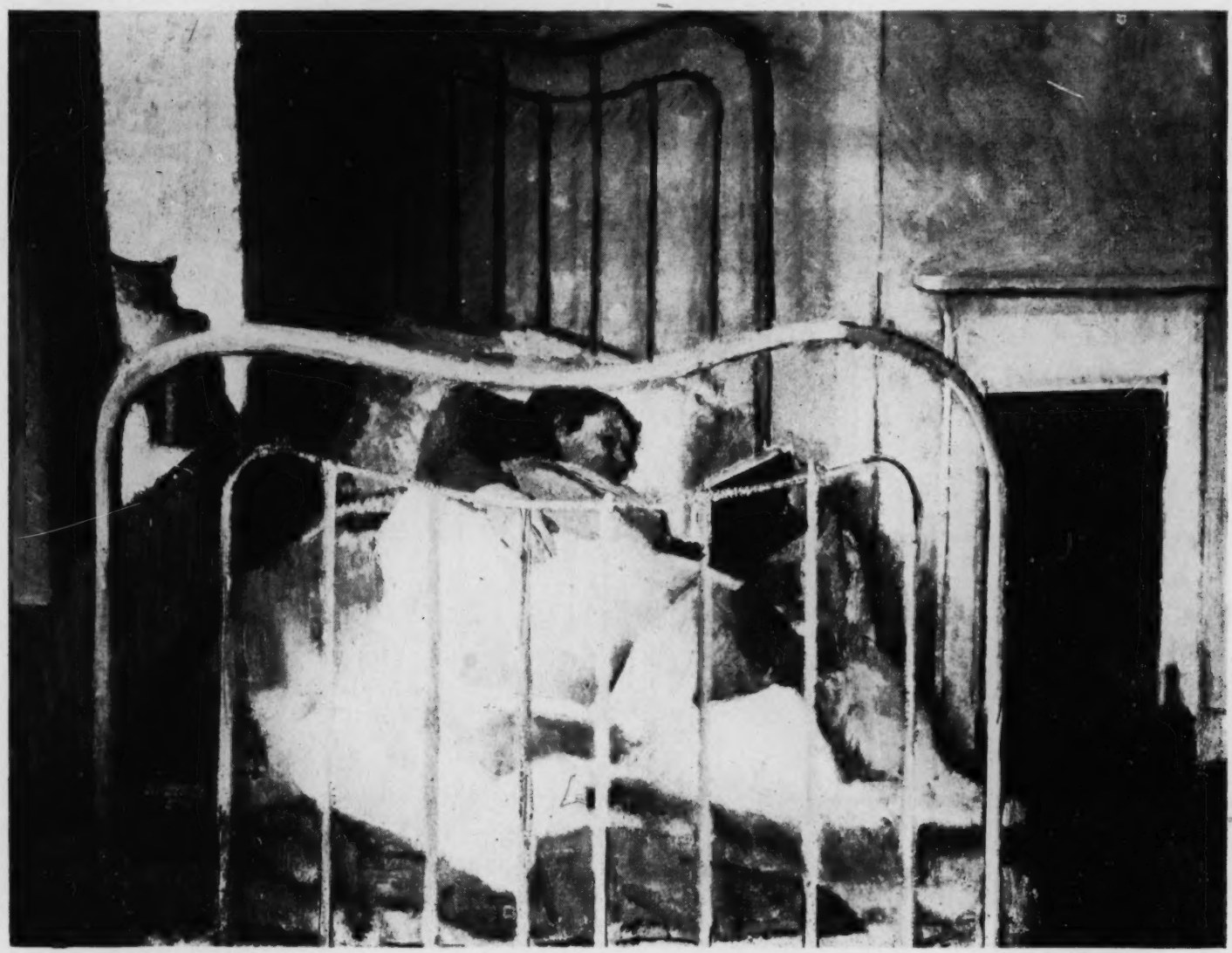

PLATE IV CLAUDE ROGERS: THE COTTAGE BEDROOM No. 37

PLATE V LAWRENCE GOWING: JUDITH AT SIXTEEN No. 23

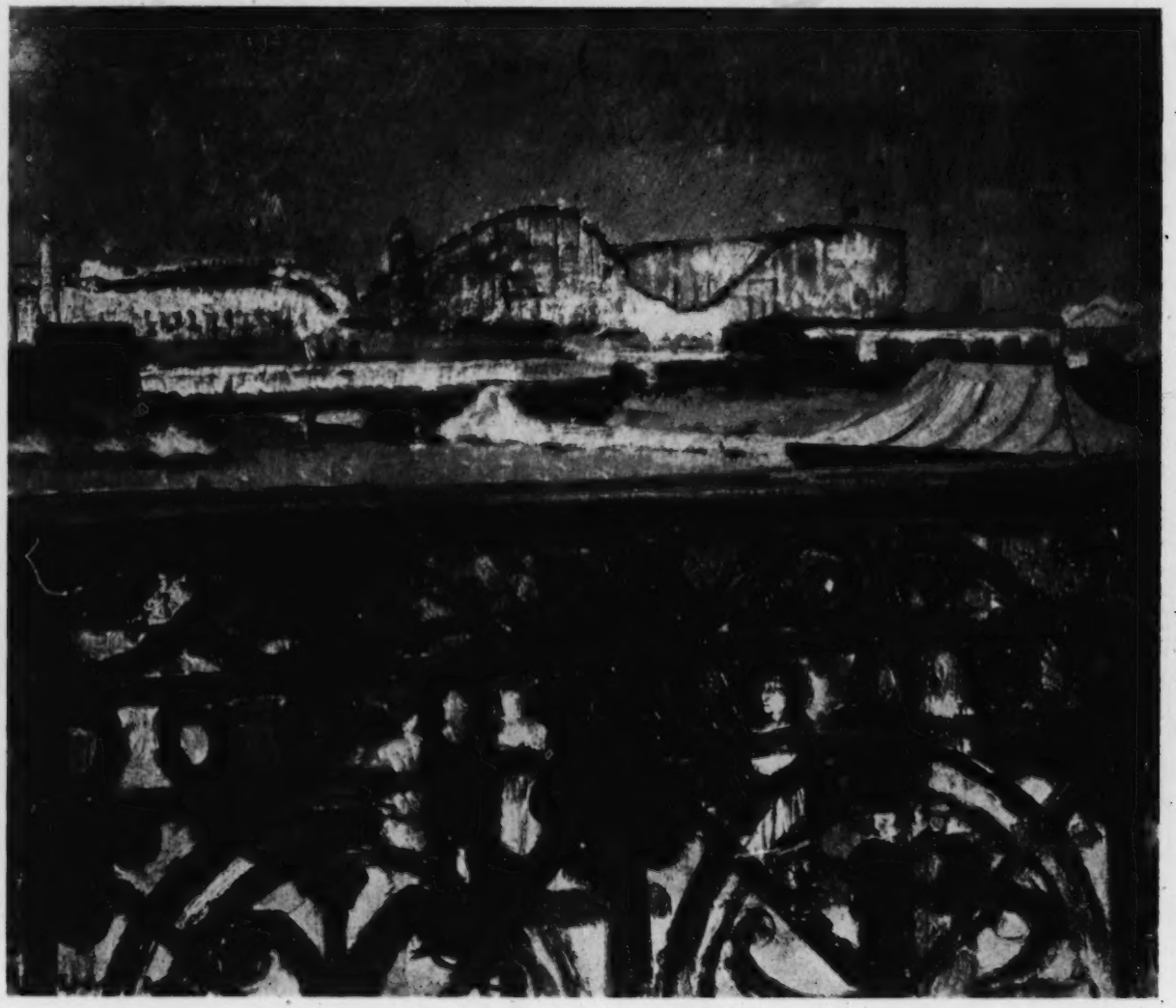

PLATE VI CLAUDE ROGERS: SOUTHPORT FRONT No. 36

PLATE VII VICTOR PASMORE: THE WOUNDED BIRD No. 30

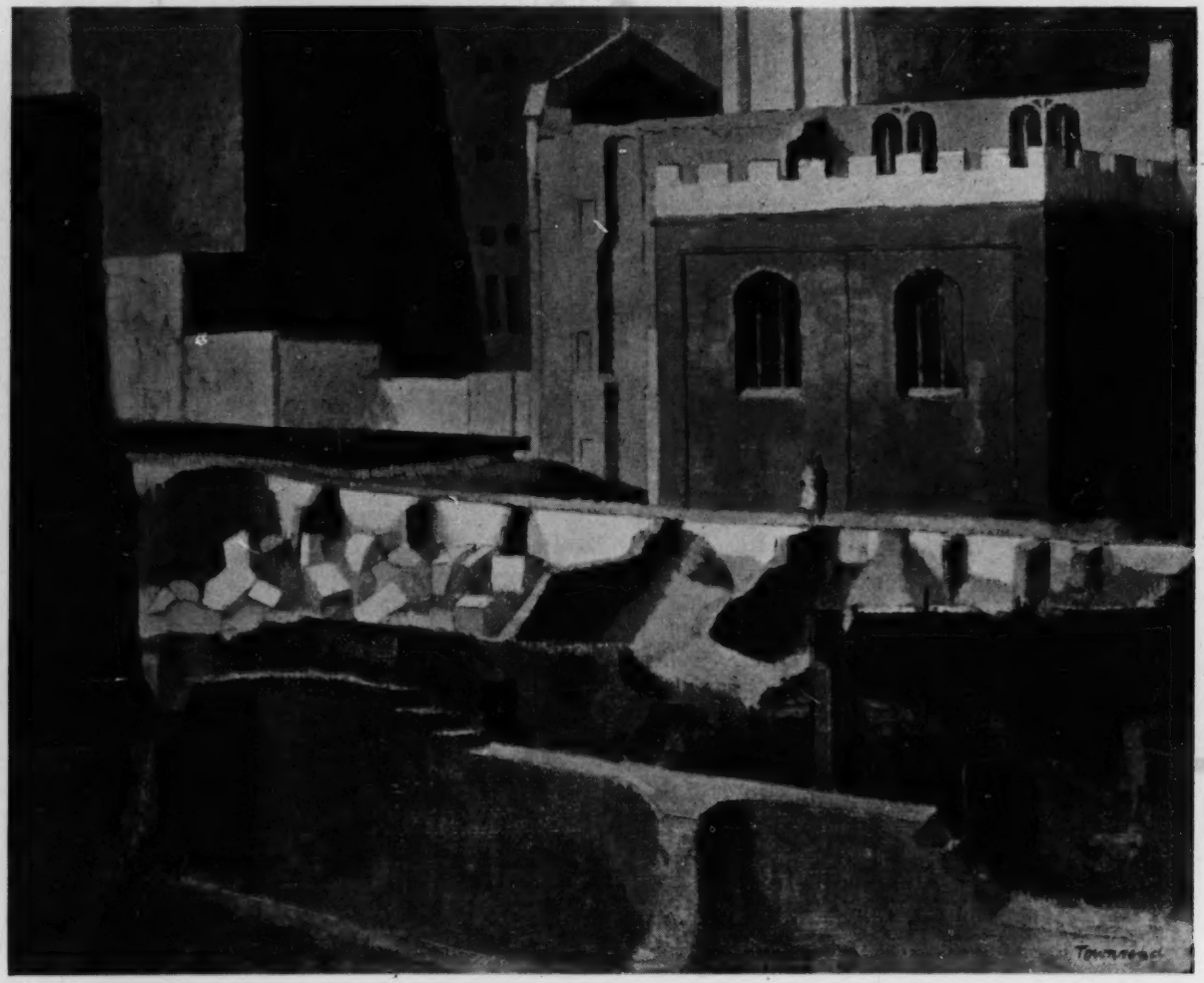

PLATE VIII WILLIAM TOWNSEND: ST ALBAN, WOOD STREET No. 43

Catalogue

GRAHAM BELL

Born in South Africa, 1910. Exhibition in Durban, 1930. Came to England in 1931. From 1934 was engaged in journalism and was sometime art critic of *The New Statesman*. An early member of the Artists' International Association. Associated with William Coldstream and others in the Euston Road School from 1937-1939. Killed on August 9, 1943, while serving as an Air Navigator in the R.A.F.

Represented in the collections of the Tate Gallery, the Contemporary Art Society, the Arts Council, the Pilgrim Trust, and the galleries of Manchester, Cardiff, Derby, etc.

See *Paintings of Graham Bell*, with an Introduction by Sir Kenneth Clark. (Lund Humphries, 1947.)

1. THOMASSON PARK, BOLTON 1938
   20 × 24 ins Oil
   Lent by Adrian Stokes, Esq.
   Reproduced in *Paintings of Graham Bell*, Pl. 8, cat. no. 14

2. DOVER, A STEAMER 1938
   18 × 14 ins Oil
   Lent by Miss A. O. Popham
   Paintings of Graham Bell, cat. no. 15

3. CHARLOTTE STREET UNDER SNOW 1939
   14 × 18 ins Oil
   Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, KCB
   Paintings of Graham Bell, cat. no. 24

4. DUBLIN, THE FOUR COURTS 1939
   16 × 20 ins Oil
   Lent by Miss A. O. Popham
   Paintings of Graham Bell, cat. no. 25

5. HEAD OF A GIRL 1939
   12 × 10 ins Oil
   Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, KCB
   Reproduced in *Paintings of Graham Bell*, Pl. 1, cat. no. 35
   Illustrated Plate II

6. BRUNSWICK SQUARE 1940
   7½ × 10 ins Watercolour

7. GRAHAMSTOWN, SOUTH AFRICA 1942
   7 × 9¾ ins Watercolour

B. A. R. CARTER

Born at Kenilworth, 1909. Studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts and the Euston Road School.

8. ROOFS AND TREES 1945
$8\frac{1}{2} \times 13$ ins Oil

9. ST ANNES'S, SOHO 1948
24×20 ins Oil

10. ACROSS LONDON WALL
$12 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pencil, pen and ink

10a. GARDANNE
$8\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pen and ink

WILLIAM COLDSTREAM

Born in Northumberland, 1908. Studied at the Slade School from 1926 to 1929. Member of the London Group, 1934. Euston Road School, 1937 to 1939. Official War Artist, 1943 to 1945.

Represented in the collections of the Tate Gallery, the Contemporary Art Society, the British Council, the Imperial War Museum, the National Museum of Wales, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Bristol Art Gallery.

11. ON THE MAP 1937
20×20 ins Oil
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, KCB
Illustrated Plate I

12. PORTRAIT OF MRS BURGER 1937/38
31×22 ins Oil
Lent by S. G. H. Burger, Esq.

13. ST PANCRAS STATION 1938
28×36 ins Oil
Lent by Miss E. M. Williamson

14. CASUALTY RECEPTION STATION, CAPUA 1944
$35 \times 42\frac{1}{2}$ ins Oil
Lent by the British Council

15. JAMAICAN AIRMAN 1945
19 × 15 ins Oil
Lent by Mrs G. Buxton

16. ST TROPHIME, ARLES 1947
13 × 16 ins Oil

17. SLEEPING SAILOR
$7\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pencil
Lent by Edward le Bas, Esq., ARA

18. HEAD OF A WOMAN
$5 \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ ins Red chalk and pen

19. TWO NUDES
$7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ ins Pencil

DENIS DAWNAY

Born 1920. Studied at the Euston Road School. Works in Scotland.

20. VILLAGE IN SNOW 1939
14 × 18 ins Oil
Lent by Humphrey Brooke, Esq.

21. NUDE 1947
25 × 30 ins Oil

LAWRENCE GOWING

Born at Stoke Newington in 1918. Studied at the Euston Road School. Member of the London Group. Author of various writings on painting. Appointed Professor of Fine Art in the University of Durham, 1948. London exhibition, Leicester Galleries, 1948.

Represented in the collections of the Tate Gallery, the Ashmolean Museum, the Contemporary Art Society, the British Council, the Arts Council, and the National Gallery of Canada.

22. GREEN APPLES
$10\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ ins Oil
Lent by Miss Esther Darlington

23. JUDITH AT SIXTEEN 1945
16 × 24 ins Oil
Lent by Humphrey Brooke, Esq.
Illustrated Plate V

24. PORTRAIT OF MISS BAKER 1948
30×22 ins Oil
Arts Council Collection

VICTOR PASMORE

Born 1908. Studied drawing at the Central School of Arts and Crafts under A. S. Hartrick. Until 1937 painted part-time while employed at County Hall, London. Member of the London Group, 1933. Euston Road School, 1937 to 1939. London exhibitions, 1941, 1943 and 1947.

Represented in the collections of the Tate Gallery, the Contemporary Art Society, the British Council, the National Gallery of Canada, the National Gallery of New South Wales, and galleries at Manchester, Leeds, Aberdeen, Wakefield, Jamaica, etc.

See *Victor Pasmore*, with an Introduction by Clive Bell. (Penguin Modern Painters, 1945.)

25. THE BRADMAN STILL LIFE 1928
17×21 ins Oil
Reproduced in *Victor Pasmore*, Pl. 6

26. THE THAMES AT HAMMERSMITH 1945
10×14 ins Oil
Lent by Samuel Carr, Esq.

27. STUDY OF THE ANTIQUE 1945
18×12 ins Oil
Illustrated Plate III

28. THE LIFE ROOM
23½×12 ins Oil
Lent by Wakefield City Art Gallery

29. GREEN LANDSCAPE WITH GATE
30×25 ins Oil
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, KCB

30. THE WOUNDED BIRD
20×30 ins Oil
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, KCB
Illustrated Plate VII

BASIL ROCKE

Born Hampstead, 1904. Studied at Reading University Art School, under Professor Cizek at Vienna and at the Euston Road School. Art Master at Bembridge School from 1931 to 1936, at Berkhampstead School from 1944 to 1947. Is now Senior Art Adviser, West Riding Education Department.

31. Back Gardens, Hampstead 1941
14×18 ins Oil

32. Girl Resting
$4\frac{3}{4}\times4\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pencil

CLAUDE ROGERS

Born 1907. Studied at the Slade School. Member of the London Group. Euston Road School, 1937 to 1939. London exhibitions at the Leicester Galleries in 1940 and 1947.

Represented in the collections of the Tate Gallery, the Contemporary Art Society, the War Artists' Advisory Committee and the galleries of Southampton, Bristol, Bradford and Jamaica.

33. Boy with Dolphin 1926
24×20 ins Oil

34. Breakfast in Bed 1937
18×24 ins Oil
Lent by the Leicester Galleries

35. Woman in Red 1943
24×20 ins Oil

36. Southport Front 1943
$8\frac{1}{2}\times10\frac{1}{2}$ ins Oil
Lent by Miss Phoebe Pool
Illustrated Plate VI

37. The Cottage Bedroom 1944
25×30 ins Oil
Arts Council Collection
Illustrated Plate IV

38. Willows and Cornfield 1947
30×25 ins Oil

39. Study for 'The Kitchen Garden' 1947
$6\frac{3}{4}\times7\frac{3}{4}$ ins Pencil, pen and ink

40. Study for a Landscape 1947
$6\frac{3}{4}\times9\frac{1}{4}$ ins Pencil

41 Young Girl
$7\frac{1}{2}\times7$ ins Pencil and ink
Lent by John Dodgson, Esq.

WILLIAM TOWNSEND

Born in London, 1909. Studied at the Slade School from 1929 to 1930. London exhibitions in 1931 and 1933. Conducted Arts Wing of the Army School of Education, Preston, 1945 to 1946.

Represented in the collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, and the galleries of Salford and Wakefield.

42. THE CONVALESCENT 1946
24 × 20 ins Oil

43. ST ALBAN, WOOD STREET 1947
25 × 30 ins Oil
Illustrated Plate VIII

44. LETCHWORTH 1947
12 × 16 ins Oil

45. BAYSWATER STREET 1948
$10\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pen and ink

46. BATTERSEA PARK 1948
$7 \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pen and ink

47. CANNON STREET STATION 1948
$9\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ ins Pen and wash
Lent by W. T. Oliver, Esq.

NOTE.—In the dimensions given, height precedes width. Where no owner is given, information with regard to prices may be obtained from the Arts Council.

Shenval Press

Other Arts Council Exhibitions

OLD MASTER DRAWINGS
from the collection of the Earl of Leicester, Holkham Hall

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from the collection of Sir Robert Witt

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acquired by
The Contemporary Art Society

PICASSO: 55 Lithographs, 1945–7

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